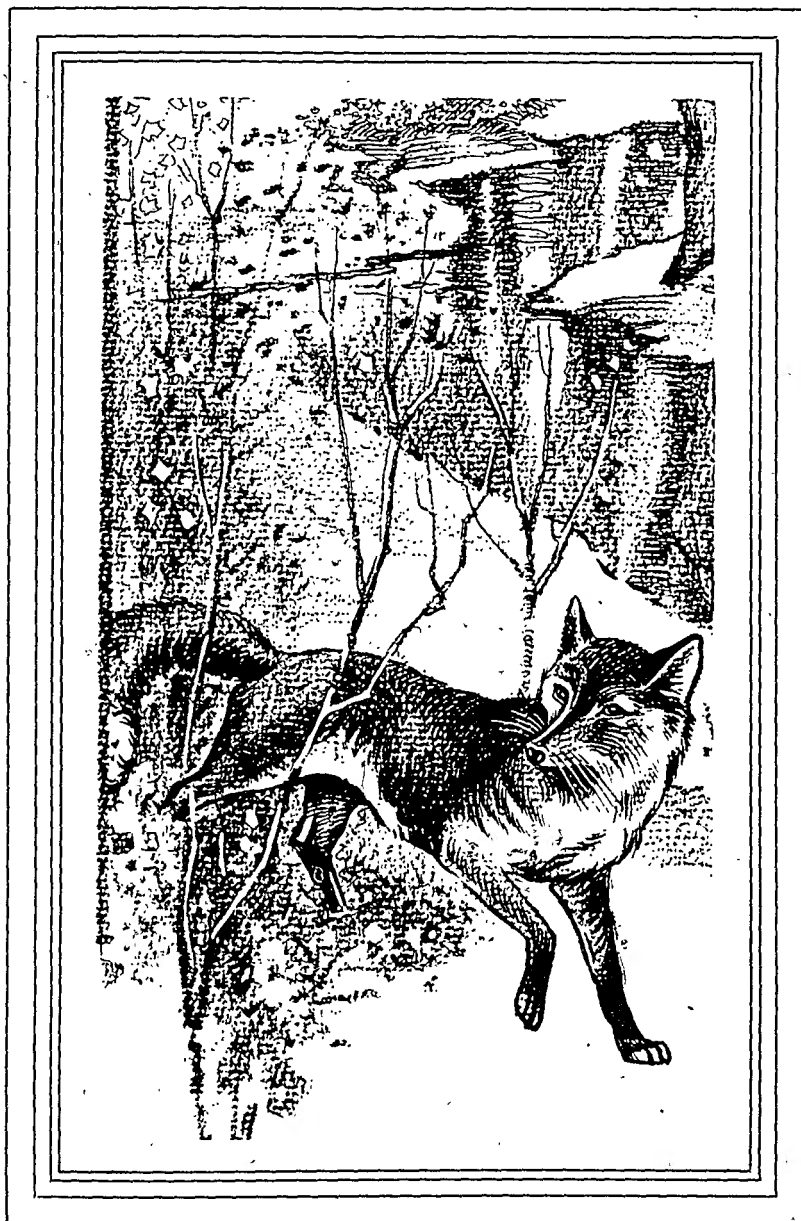


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3/Reports. No. 14.

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THE
FUR INDUSTRY *of* MANITOBA



The Honourable John Bracken,
Premier of Manitoba.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith a report on the Fur Industry of Manitoba, being Project No. 13 under the Economic Survey, and fourteenth in a series of reports covering many phases of the economic and social life of the province. This report is the work of J. Melven of the Game and Fisheries Branch, Department of Mines and Natural Resources.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

C.B. Davidson,
Director.

Winnipeg, Manitoba.
July 30, 1930.

THE FUR INDUSTRY OF MANITOBA

- by -

J.Melven

Published by
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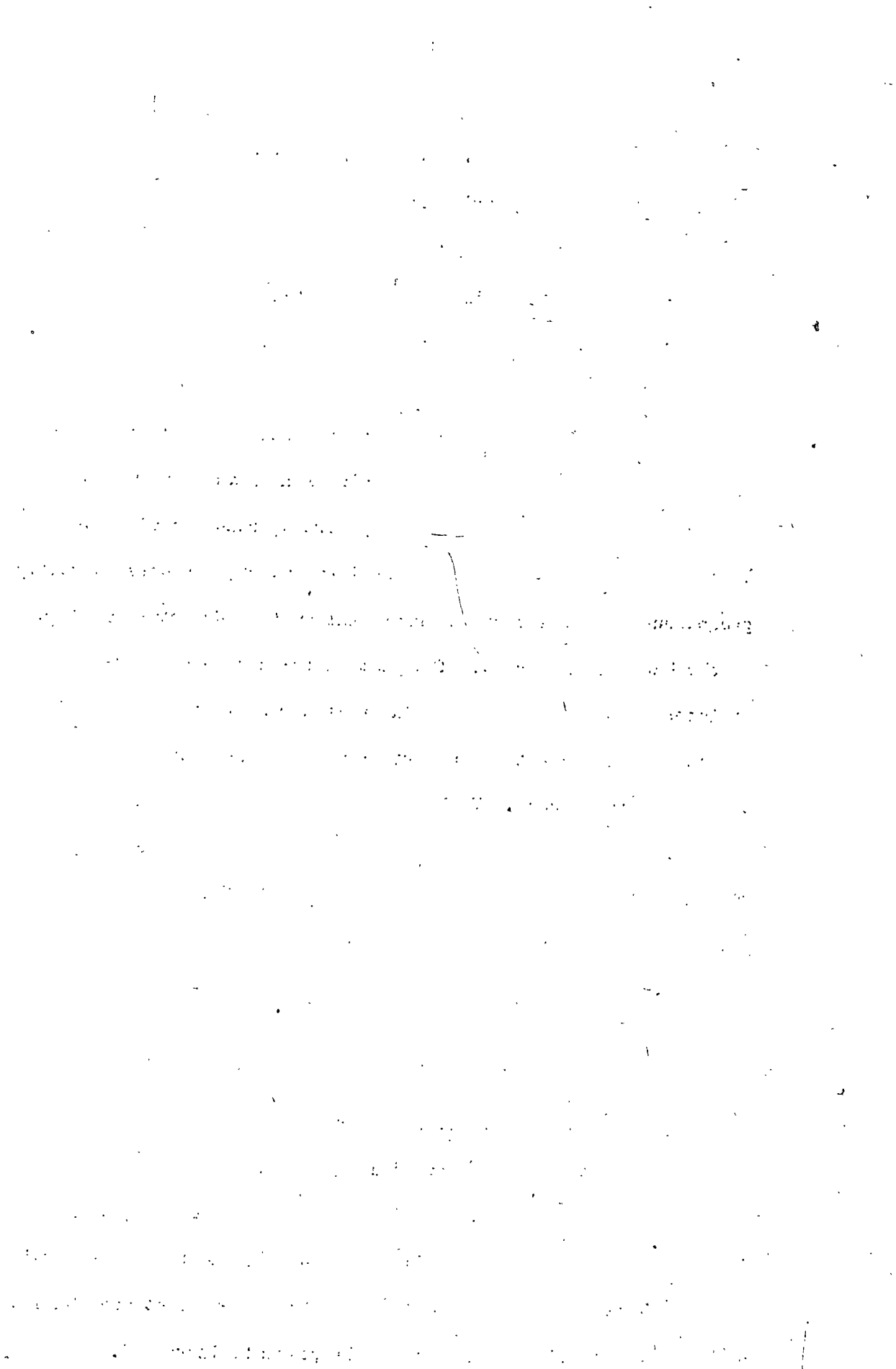


CONCLUSION

While it is considered that a picture of the fur trade has been presented at a not undue length and its inception and long history commented on, our story only takes us to September 1937, the latest date to which complete figures can be given. Since then the trade has experienced such vicissitudes of fortune that many dealers have had to reorganize their finances and there are few who have not suffered decreased earnings.

The reason is not far to seek as one has only to look at the troubled state of the world and the disorganization of European markets to realize that a business like the fur trade, reacting as it does to every rise and fall of the political barometer, can only be really prosperous in periods of international amity. Uncertainty of future is the bane of the trade. The past winter has seen so many moments of international crisis and industrial unrest that at the start of the season the market was uncertain and weak and has since failed to materially improve. The painful process of adjusting values has adversely affected trappers, fur farmers and dealers but there is reason to hope that the worst has been experienced and that next winter will see a revived demand for the products of northern Manitoba.

In the meantime this temporary breakdown of the market will not deter the government from carrying on its policy of active protection and conservation of all game and fur-bearing animals. All efforts will be bent to finish the plans laid down for the rehabilitation of the muskrat in the swamp lands of the north, for the encouragement of fur farming in all phases of its development, and for the general control of the trade so that its value to the province may continue to be correctly appraised, and, if at all possible increased.



THE FUR INDUSTRY OF MANITOBA

INTRODUCTION

The earliest approach to what is now known as Manitoba was made by navigators from the Old World in their search for a short cut to the Orient through the North West Passage. In the course of these attempts in the 16th and 17th centuries Hudson Bay was discovered and contact made with the natives around the shores of the Bay. Beaver pelts were bought from the natives and taken to England where a ready use was found for them in the manufacture of hats and as it was known that the pelts of other animals could also be obtained from the same sources, the early navigators got in touch with city of London merchants and interested the more adventurous of them in financing an expedition seeking to develop this trade and bring to England furs of a richness and lustre hitherto unknown.

Eventually, and about 85 years after Hudson Bay was discovered by the bold but unfortunate navigator Henrik Hudson in 1600, there sailed from London the good ship "Nonsuch" Ketch (Captain Zachariah Gillam) of which the Hudson's Bay Company were the owners, bound for the west shore of the then almost unknown Bay.

Captain Gillam's expedition was for the purpose of building forts and opening up trade for the Hudson's Bay Company with the Cree and Chipewyan Indians of Hudson Bay following the successful establishment of similar posts on James Bay and on the east side of Hudson Bay some years earlier.

A fort was established at the mouth of the Nelson River later followed by one at the mouth of the Churchill River and thus, 253 years

ago began the commercial life of what is now the province of Manitoba. These two forts or fur trading posts as they really were, are still in existence, though not exactly on the original sites and rebuilt over and over again, and are still owned and operated by the original founders, the Hudson's Bay Company. Thus Manitoba, the central province of this wide Dominion owes its inception to the courage of English seamen and with the exception of Quebec owns the oldest seaport in Canada.

From the days of discovery until the middle of the 19th century the history of Manitoba was the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Nor' West Company, formed by Montreal merchants, and private adventurers encroaching on the domains of these large and monopolistic concerns. The Hudson's Bay Company expanded to the south until it reached Lake Winnipeg and the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers where it met with French adventurers from the east and so continued west over what must have appeared to these early explorers as illimitable prairies until the Rocky Mountains were met and conquered and the Pacific ocean reached.

For the first few years the only fur considered valuable was the beaver and this for many years was bought by weight and was the standard of value by which all merchandise given in exchange was reckoned. Thus for a gun, kettle, axe, etc., so many pounds of beaver pelts were charged. Gradually the value of other furs began to be recognized and today the fur trade has a use and a value for all fur bearers from the silver-fox to the squirrel and jack rabbit.

The sole market for the furs taken in the early days was London. The furs were sent down to posts in the Bay and from there shipped by the yearly vessel to England. This vessel brought the annual "outfit"

of trade goods and for many years was the only means of communication with the outside world. Little or no provisions were imported, the Company's employees lived "on the country".

SETTLEMENT

At the beginning of the 19th century it was appreciated that Manitoba could be much more than a vast forest preserve and that lands existed in the southern part eminently suitable for agricultural settlement and for the support of a far larger population than could exist by hunting and trapping. The small farmers and cotters of Scotland heard the call of these free and fertile acres, and, glad to free themselves from a rapacious landlordism, flocked to the west and settled around the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers at Fort Garry.

So Fort Garry, re-christened Winnipeg, passed through a stormy infancy, a strenuous adolescence to a vigorous manhood as a city from which settlement spread westwards and transportation by road, rail and steamer opened up all available lands and population grew apace.

Naturally, the original denizens of these lands, the buffalo, deer of all kinds, foxes, beaver and lynx and their overlord - the Indian - had to retreat before the army of civilization and this army, as is the way of all armies, spared not bird, fish nor animal, but all contributed largely to the sustenance of settlers who were, perforce, largely dependent on them until complete facilities could be established for the export of their produce and importation of their necessities.

In the meantime Manitoba had become a province and from its very inception the Government had recognized the necessity of protecting the wild life of the country and from the first tentative beginnings

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem.

2. The second part is devoted to a detailed analysis of the case.

3. The third part is devoted to a discussion of the results.

4. The fourth part is devoted to a discussion of the conclusions.

5. The fifth part is devoted to a discussion of the future work.

6. The sixth part is devoted to a discussion of the references.

7. The seventh part is devoted to a discussion of the appendix.

8. The eighth part is devoted to a discussion of the bibliography.

9. The ninth part is devoted to a discussion of the index.

10. The tenth part is devoted to a discussion of the table of contents.

11. The eleventh part is devoted to a discussion of the list of figures.

12. The twelfth part is devoted to a discussion of the list of tables.

13. The thirteenth part is devoted to a discussion of the list of references.

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35. The thirty-fifth part is devoted to a discussion of the list of figures.

the Game Laws have expanded into the present elaborate code regulating open and closed seasons for all animals, licensing all trappers and dealers and levying a royalty on all furs taken from the wild.

While the settlement of the land south and to the west of our lake country depleted very considerably native wild life, the country to the north was still virgin forest and the home of innumerable fur bearers and game animals. Its development was slow and followed the rivers and lakes on which canoes and York boats, manned by rowers were the only means of transport. Fur trading posts were established at strategical points on all large rivers and lakes and soon contact was made with every band of Indians roaming the country until even the Eskimos in the far north contributed white foxes and polar bears to the collections of the fur dealers.

Thus, in the northern part of the province the fur trade for a long period of years, and indeed until 1914, remained in status quo, largely the preserve of the Hudson's Bay Company whose supremacy in the trade was not seriously questioned until the Great War upset many other things besides the fur markets of the world. On the whole, the trade in the north was very profitable. Fur markets were steady and the violent fluctuations of recent years were unknown. Competition was purely local and easily dealt with if it became too insistent. The Indians were tractable and encouraged to retain the ways of life natural to them, their knowledge of white men being limited to the dour and stern factors of the company whose word was law and whose displeasure was not to be disregarded.

So, from generation to generation, the fur trade in northern Manitoba took its even way, returning handsome profits to investors in London, not unduly depleting supplies of fur animals but respecting

its own laws of open and closed seasons, strenuously discouraging development not originating in itself and playing the beneficent despot to the Indian.

THE WORLD WAR AND AFTER

With the Great War, however, and its aftermath the whole question of the natural resources of the province came up for fresh consideration. The Game Laws were expanded and the principle of levying a royalty on all furs taken from the wild was adopted, thus ensuring that the public purse obtained its share of the wealth which rightfully belonged to the people. All engaged in the Fur Trade were licensed and records were kept so that the annual wealth derived from fur bearers could be estimated.

Prior to 1914 as already mentioned, fur values were more or less steady, any fluctuations taking place being easily explained by change of fashion or temporary lack of supply. But as soon as the War started, the large fur markets panicked and the winter of 1914-15 saw values decline to a point never before reached. The trade sank into insignificance but as the War went on from year to year the Trade recovered and shared fully in the tide of prosperity caused by War expenditure here and in Great Britain and the States. Values rose steadily until the climax was reached in the 1919-20 season when almost unbelievable prices were realized for furs. This prosperity attracted large numbers of men to the northern part of the province, numerous trading companies were formed and the old time trader and Indian found competitors everywhere. Where hitherto they had scarcely ever seen a stranger, their settlements now assumed the aspect of villages with

several stores and their trapping grounds saw the cabins of many white trappers.

RE-ADJUSTMENT

When the inevitable fall in values came, it came rapidly and without warning and was complete. All were caught in the avalanche - trappers, traders, dealers, brokers and manufacturers. The trade had to be readjusted from top to bottom. The companies and traders, whose only experience of the trade was gained in a short period of unnatural prosperity, disappeared and many more or less destitute trappers were left stranded in the north. A sharp lesson on the danger of booms had been given to one of the oldest trades in the world but like many other lessons it has been forgotten and the lesson has had to be learned again several times since, age being no criterion of wisdom.

The last 16 years has seen many changes in the fur market. It is the first to react to international unrest. It is at the mercy of feminine fashion which knows no law and very little sense and the manufacturing end being mainly in alien hands, labour troubles are frequent and often prolonged. In short it produces a luxury product which is dependent on the material prosperity of the few and until the long hoped for general economic betterment of the masses arrives, the fur market will bend to the caprice of the rich.

THE FUR INDUSTRY OF MANITOBA

REGULATION

Leaving the past now, let us see what our native fur bearers, game animals and birds mean to the people of this province at the present time. But first of all it might be interesting to explain how the Law, as laid out in the Game Act, regulates the commercial

side of these natural resources and how the revenue necessary to provide protection is obtained.

The province for game purposes is divided into two sections, the north and south, the dividing line being the 53rd parallel of latitude. In these two parts the open seasons differ somewhat, the southern part where furs are scarcer receiving more protection than the northern, both for reasons of accessibility and density of population. It would be impracticable to patrol the northern part to the same extent as is done in the south.

Animals, such as foxes and lynx, whose fur remain prime for a comparatively short period are only allowed to be taken during the months of November, December and January with a two weeks extension in the north. Others, such as mink, otter, beaver and muskrats which are more or less amphibious remain prime longer and the open season for them is later. Muskrats can only be trapped in the spring and it is now many years since the fall and winter trapping of these was permitted. Wolves can be killed at any time by any means, except poison. No special seasons are stated for weasel and skunk but no trapping is allowed before 1st. November and all trapping must cease by 10th. May in the north and 30th April in the south.

Game guardians patrol the southern part of the province all the year round using every means of transportation. At one or two strategic points in the north resident game guardians are located, and as all the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are ex-officio game guardians, their numerous detachments throughout the province are of great help in enforcing the regulations.

For purposes of record and to ensure the payment of royalty on all furs taken from the wild, trappers and dealers are required to

furnish full particulars of all furs trapped and bought and sold. The first purchaser is responsible for the royalty which really means that the dealer deducts the royalty from the price he offers the trapper and pays it to the Government. An export permit must be taken out before furs are exported from the province and a tanner's permit before furs can be processed in the province. The only fur dressers in the province are two firms operating in Winnipeg.

The principal points to which furs are exported are: Montreal, New York, Chicago, Toronto, Prince Edward Island, London and Vancouver. Transportation companies must not accept shipments of fur unless accompanied by an export permit. The same applies to the Post Office when shipments are sent by mail. In this way a complete record is kept of all furs trapped and by whom, by whom purchased and the ultimate disposition, whether sold, exported, dressed or kept on hand. To take a typical example; a trapper of the north may sell his catch to a northern fur trader, the trader ships it to a fur auction in Winnipeg, the fur auction sells it to a Winnipeg broker, the broker having a customer in view, ships it to New York. All these transactions are reported in detail on monthly forms to the Game Branch and are checked up - the purchases of one dealer against the sales of another.

A vast amount of fur comes into this province from the east and the west on which we have no claim for royalty, but it has all to be reported by dealers in and out so as to have a complete record of a dealers transactions for the Fur Trade year.

Open and closed seasons are shown on the following page.



NORTH OF THE 53RD PARALLEL

OPEN SEASON INDICATED BY THE WHITE SQUARES												CLOSED SEASON INDICATED BY THE BLACK SQUARES											
BAG LIMITS—Geese, 5 a day; possession, 15; season, 50. Ducks, 12 a day; possession, 40; season, 100. Coats and Rails, 25 a day. Wilson or Jack Snipe, 25 a day. Ptarmigan, 15 a day; season, 50. Deer, etc., 1 male animal.																							
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December											
Wild Geese, Wild Ducks of any kind, Coats, Rails.																							
Wilson or Jack Snipe.																							
Ptarmigan.																							
Mourning Dove, Little Brown, Sandhill or Whooping Crane, Swans or Curlews, or shore birds of any variety, Wood or Elder Duck, Plover, Woodcock or Yellowlegs, Caper Calais, Phalarope, Gull or Wild Turkey.																							
Ruffed, Canada, Sharp-tailed or Pinnated Grouse and Hungarian Partridge. Bag limit and date to be set by Order-in-Council.																							
Male Caribou, Moose, Deer.																							
Antelope, Cabri, Elk or Wapiti. Female or any male under the age of one year of Caribou, Deer, Moose.																							
Otter.																							
Beaver, Marten, Raccoon, Badger, Skunk (Buffalo), Mink-on.																							
Fisher, Mink.																							
Any Fox (other than Blue, White or Arctic), Lynx.																							
Blue, White or Arctic Fox.																							
Muskrats.																							

FOURSEATS—in that portion of the Province lying to the South of the 53rd Parallel East of Lake Winnipeg and to the Bloodvein River, the season is from March 20th to May 10th.

SOUTH OF THE 53RD PARALLEL

OPEN SEASON INDICATED BY THE WHITE SQUARES												CLOSED SEASON INDICATED BY THE BLACK SQUARES												
BAG LIMITS—Geese, 5 a day; possession, 15; season, 50. Ducks, 12 a day; possession, 40; season, 100. Coats and Rails, 25 a day. Wilson or Jack Snipe, 25 a day. Ptarmigan, 15 a day; season, 50. Deer, etc., 1 male animal.	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Wild Geese, Wild Ducks of any kind, Coats, Rails.																								
Wilson or Jack Snipe.																								
Ptarmigan.																								
Mourning Dove, Little Brown, Sandhill or Whooping Crane, Swans or Curlews, or shore birds of any variety, Wood or Elder Duck, Plover, Woodcock or Yellowlegs, Cape Gallin, Phalarope, Quail or Wild Turkey.																								
Ruffed, Canada, Sharp-tailed or Pinnated Grouse and Hungarian Partridge. Bag limit and date to be set by Order-in-Council.																								
*Male Caribou, Moose, Deer.																								
*Male Caribou, Moose, Deer.																								
Antelope, Cabri, Elk or Wapiti. Female or any male under the age of one year of Caribou, Deer, Moose.																								
{Otter, Beaver, Badger, Marten, Raccoon, Skunk (Buffalo) or Minkon.																								
Fisher, Mink.																								
Fox or Lynx.																								
Muskrats.																								

*BIG GAME—Oct. 1st to Oct. 15th—in that portion of the Province lying North of the Winnipeg River, East of Lake Winnipeg to the Ontario Boundary and North to the 53rd Parallel of North Latitude. Reopens Nov. 20th to Dec. 31st.
Nov. 20th to Dec. 31st—in that portion of the Province (except game preserves) lying South of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Winnipeg to Edmonton line, and West of the Red River.

Nov. 20th to Dec. 31st—in any other portion of the Province (except game preserves) not included in the above

*MUSKRATS—in that portion of the Province lying to the South of the 53rd Parallel East of Lake Winnipeg and to the Bloodvein River, the season is from March 20th to May 10th.
*OTTER—in the area lying East of Lake Winnipeg to the Ontario Boundary and North of the Winnipeg River to the 53rd Parallel of North Latitude, and in that part of the White-shell Forest Reserve lying to the North of the Whiteshell Game Preserve, the season is from Nov. 1st to April 30th.

Animals and birds which have decreased almost to the point of extinction are fully protected all the year round and seasons are only opened for the others when, in the case of fur bearers they are in the prime condition, and in the case of game birds and animals for a short shooting season in the fall.

Sporting game can only be taken by sporting methods. The animal or bird must be allowed a fair chance, the use of nets, snares, pump guns and other unfair methods is strictly prohibited. Sundays are always a closed season.

Limits are imposed on the bag allowed each licensee.

The destruction of predatory birds and animals is encouraged.

The use of dogs in hunting game animals is prohibited but in hunting game birds trained dogs, under license, may be used.

Game birds and animals killed can only be exported under permit.

Fur bearers can be taken by trap only. The use of snares, poison and spears is against the Law.

Game preserves to the number of 29 are established in the province wherein moose, deer and elk can find complete refuge.

VALUE OF THE FUR INDUSTRY

The results achieved by the fur industry of Manitoba for the last few years can be commented on under such headings as may give one a general idea of the value, extent and prospects for the future of the wild life of the province.

1. Employment, - Number of people employed in the Fur Trade (exclusive of fur farming) for the year ending 30th September, 1937 was:

Fur dealers -	425
Travelling agents -	260
Trappers (white) -	5,239
" (Treaty Indian)	1,700
Total -	<u>7,624</u>

Employment in the fur trade is, of course, purely seasonable, although some white trappers make enough to keep themselves the year round. Many fur dealers supplement their earnings during the off season by buying hides, wool, seneca root and horse-hair, and the great majority of them are general store-keepers.

2. Trapping.— The trappers (white and Indian) trapped furs valued as under:—

<u>Season</u>	<u>Estimated Value</u>
	\$
1928-29	1,143,438.30
1929-30	668,939.37
1930-31	520,274.95
1931-32	529,618.60
1932-33	718,455.43
1933-34	1,075,449.60
1934-35	968,868.45
1935-36	1,001,336.15
1936-37	1,212,885.94

The approximate value is taken from figures supplied by three of the largest local dealers and striking a general average. The dealers supply the average value per pelt and this is averaged and multiplied by the number of pelts on which royalty has been collected.

3. Trade.— Practically all the furs trapped were forwarded to Winnipeg to local dealers and fur auctions or to the Hudson's Bay Company who ship all their furs to London.

These dealers, auction companies and the Hudson's Bay Company, in addition to handling the furs trapped by our own trappers and furs produced from Manitoba fur farms, received large quantities of furs from all other provinces in Canada. In turn all these furs were put up for sale here and exported under permit. The value of these exports is:—

<u>Season</u>	<u>Value</u>
1931-32	\$1,791,365.95
1932-33	2,311,069.30
1933-34	2,855,298.80
1934-35	3,532,534.35
1935-36	3,599,580.50
1936-37	4,789,536.75



.....

2

It will thus be seen that Winnipeg is established as a very important fur centre and it attracts three times more furs than are actually produced in Manitoba. The two auction companies hold monthly sales which are attended by buyers from all parts of Canada and the U.S.A. In addition local dealers have world wide connections and furs are exported from Winnipeg to Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Chicago, Prince Edward Island, Paris and London.

4. Processing. - A considerable amount of fur is processed in Winnipeg by two local tanneries. The value of this fur is:-

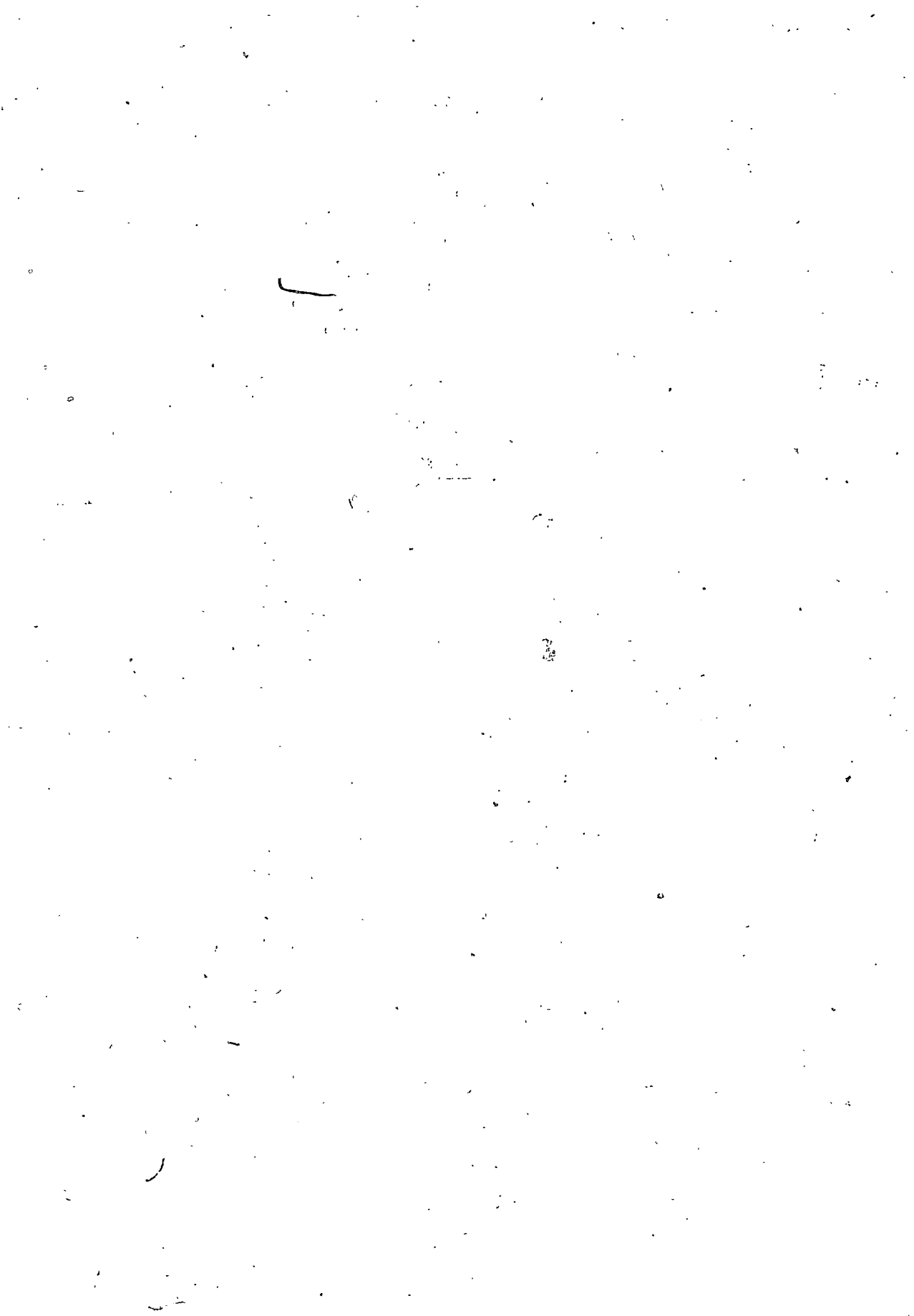
<u>Season</u>	<u>Value</u>
1933-34	\$ 176,297.16
1934-35	212,422.35
1935-36	314,387.60
1936-37	339,334.45

5. Fur Farming. - Fur farming will be touched upon later but in the meantime it may be noted that the pelts produced from fur farms in Manitoba amounted to:-

<u>Season</u>	<u>Value</u>
1930-31	\$ 177,005.00
1931-32	159,777.00
1932-33	133,893.00
1933-34	248,072.00
1934-35	157,664.00
1935-36	304,453.00
1936-37	443,834.71

6. Value of Fur Trade. - For the season 1936-37 the economic wealth produced by and through the fur trade in Manitoba may be summarized as follows:

	<u>Direct</u>
Furs from the wild -	\$ 1,212,885.94
" " fur farms -	443,834.71
Total -	<u>1,656,720.65</u>



Indirect

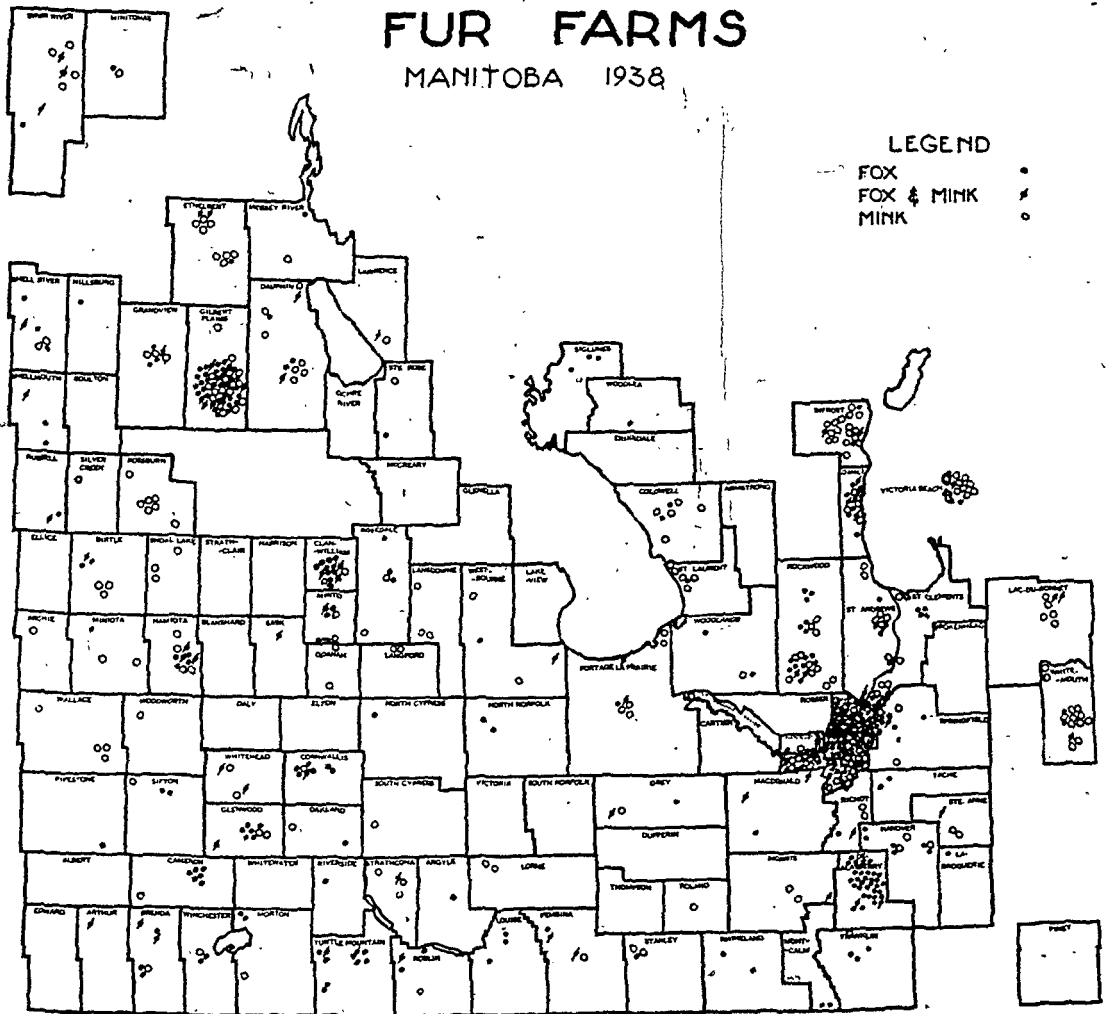
Furs exported from Manitoba -	\$ 4,789,536.75
" processed in Manitoba -	339,384.45
	<hr/>
	5,128,921.20
Less reduced in Manitoba -	<hr/> 1,656,720.65
	<hr/>
Total -	\$ 3,472,200.55

7. Incidental Employment, - Besides the direct employment noted in paragraph No.1, notice should be taken of the employment given through the fur trade to:-

1. Express companies in the shipping of furs by express to and from Winnipeg.
2. Men employed by tanneries.
3. Men employed by auction companies and fur dealers.
4. Men employed in the transport by air of furs from the north.
5. Men employed by fur farmers and supplies of feed and pens for fur farms.

All these owe part of their employment to the fur trade though exact figures are not available to support this.

MANITOBA 1938





FUR FARMS

With the inevitable advance of civilization the area available for trapping has decreased although the numbers of trappers have increased with the result that fur bearers taken from year to year show greater declines than can be attributed to natural causes. To make up for this the experiment of rearing domestically, silver foxes and mink, was tried many years ago. This proved so successful and so profitable that today the output from fur farms in Manitoba amounts to 25 per cent of the total fur production of the province.

The value of pelts taken from fur bearing animals reared on fur farms is as follows:-

<u>Season</u>	<u>Value</u>
1930/31	177,985.00
1931/32	159,777.00
1932/33	133,893.00
1933/34	248,072.00
1934/35	157,664.00
1935/36	304,453.00
1936/37	443,834.71

The breeding animals kept on fur farms are reported as follows:-

	<u>1935 (Jan.)</u>	<u>1936 (Jan.)</u>	<u>1937 (Jan.)</u>
Mink	3,285	4,666	7,916
Wolf	12	10	2
Nutria	17	-	-
Raccoon	78	69	52
Fitch	207	167	39
Beaver	18	15	16
Fisher	12	19	19
Marten	16	16	21
Fox, Silver	7,417	9,217	10,919
" Blue	25	32	31
" Cross	115	182	133
" Red	126	128	80
Badger	2	-	-
	<u>11,330</u>	<u>14,521</u>	<u>19,228</u>

The under-noted statement shows a comparative estimated value of live animals on hand and value of land, buildings and fixtures as at 31st December, 1935 and 1936.

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>		<u>ESTIMATED VALUE</u>	
	<u>1935</u>	<u>1936</u>	<u>1935</u> \$	<u>1936</u> \$
Beaver	15	16	320.00	315.00
Fisher	19	19	1,990.00	1,940.00
Fitch	175	39	658.00	112.00
Fox, Blue	32	31	1,880.00	1,450.00
" Cross	185	133	5,316.00	5,530.00
" Rod	128	80	1,703.00	1,289.00
" Silver	9,627	10,919	766,113.00	747,193.80
Marten	16	21	1,030.00	1,610.00
Mink	4,832	7,916	122,266.50	273,534.00
Nutria	-	-	-	-
Raccoon	69	52	639.00	495.00
Wolf	10	2	72.00	20.00
			<u>\$901,987.50</u>	<u>\$1,033,538.80</u>
Estimated Value of Animals on hand			<u>1935</u> \$901,987.50	<u>1936</u> \$ 1,033,538.80
Estimated Value of Land, Buildings and Fixtures ...			<u>715,604.14</u>	<u>807,465.60</u>
Total Capital Value of Fur Farms...			<u>\$1,617,591.64</u>	<u>\$ 1,841,004.40</u>

NUMBER OF FUR FARMS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1915	Nil
1920	2
1925	64
1930	386
1937	660

The Departmental Revenue derived from fur farms is in the form of license fees which are on a sliding scale dependent on the number of animals kept. Minimum fee \$1.00, maximum fee \$10.00. This revenue

for the last six years amounted to:-

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Permit Fees</u>
	\$
1931/32	1,597.21
1932/33	1,805.25
1933/34	1,724.00
1934/35	1,366.00
1935/36	1,607.50
1936/37	1,741.00

While the numbers of silver foxes bred on and exported from Manitoba farms show a substantial increase from year to year, the general quality of them needs improvement. The proportion of low grades and off-colour skins is too high and the better ranchers are making every effort to produce as large a proportion as possible of clear all silvery pelts as these command the highest prices, both in this country and abroad.

The mink average is good and as mink from the wild continue to show decreases in numbers year by year, this article can be depended upon to produce a reasonable profit to the rancher.

Fur ranching, although there is still a lot to learn, has passed the experimental stage and will continue to increase its proportion of the total fur production of the province. The problem for ranchers is to improve the quality of pelts and this can only be overcome by time, experience and the exchange of knowledge.

The department has established an Experimental Fur Farm at Fort Garry University site under the supervision of Dr. J. A. Allon, Pathologist. By intensive study of silver fox and mink, Dr. Allon is able to advise the numerous fur farmers of the province regarding the breeding and dieting of those animals, a service which is of great value to the industry.

The domestication of fisher and marten, two very valuable and all too rare animals, is being studied, but it will be some time before results can be reported.

The functions of the laboratory which is combined with the new Experimental Fur Farm, include the pathological and bacteriological analysis of game animals and game birds, and the carcasses of fur-bearing animals. The laboratory also provides an extension field service for the prevention and control of parasitic and infectious disease, and is recognized as a clearing house for the dissemination of tested information on all phases of fur farming and wildlife conservation.

DIRECT GOVERNMENTAL REVENUES FROM FUR INDUSTRY

The revenue collected from the fur trade amounts to and is made up as follows:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Licenses</u>	<u>Royalty</u>
	\$	\$
1931/32	11,514.16	35,602.80
1932/33	9,809.97	57,231.61
1933/34	13,651.00	71,939.15
1934/35	15,404.25	71,318.50
1935/36	14,079.00	50,913.40
1936/37	17,815.00	47,876.55

The revenue from licenses includes licenses for fur dealers and travelling agents, trappers and tanners and fees for issuing export, holding and special beaver permits.

The royalty is levied at the following rates on all furs taken from the wild:

Weasel	\$ 0.05 each	Blue Fox	\$ 0.75 each
Muskrat	0.05 "	Red Fox	0.75 "
Mink	0.25 "	Not. Spec.	
Skunk	0.10 "	Fox	0.75 "
Badger	0.25 "	Wolverine	0.25 "
Wolf	0.25 "	Beaver	1.00 "
Black Fox	3.00 "	Otter	1.00 "
Silver Fox	3.00 "	Fisher	1.50 "
Cross Fox	1.50 "	Marten	1.00 "
White Fox	1.50 "	Boar	0.25 "
		Lynx	1.00 "

The proportion of royalty to estimated value is:-

Season 1934/35	6.73 %
1935/36	4.65 %
1936/37	4.25 %

As furs have since taken a decided drop in value the proportion for the current season will be considerably higher.

A PERISHABLE ASSET

Forethought for the future compels steps being taken to foster breeding stocks and to introduce positive measures of rehabilitation to supplement the negative restrictions imposed in the Game Act. The wild life of this country is a perishable resource in that, as the country develops and population increases, its range is proportionately restricted, and that part of the province which by nature can only be suitable for fur bearers, must be enabled to support larger numbers.

Other resources of the province such as forests and mines can be depended upon to produce almost fixed amounts of wealth from year to year, but so many uncontrollable elements fight against the fur bearers that it is impossible to predict what next year will bring forth. Curves, graphs and statistics can be made up showing



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the production for a period of years, but the fundamental reasons for the violent fluctuations shown are a matter for scientific research, and are at present the subject of Dominion-wide inquiry.

ASSISTANCE TO THE INDUSTRY

However, much can be done outside the laboratory to encourage increase, and the Department has done, and is doing everything possible in this direction.

The Department has established twenty-nine Game Preserves in Manitoba comprising 7,471 sections or 4,783,360 acres. The boundaries of several of these preserves have recently been surveyed and posted with signs prohibiting hunting and shooting of any kind of game. A very material increase in wildlife has been noted in some of the preserves. The overflow of game from preserves properly located and patrolled should be a decided factor in most cases, in providing ample sport for the hunter, and fur-bearers for the trapper.

In certain districts the government has leased certain swamp lands to responsible parties for the purpose of raising muskrats in their natural environment. In former years the catch of rats on these lands was considerably in excess of what it has been in the last few years, and by leaving to private enterprise the task of raising water levels by dams and ditches, planting suitable food, and doing everything else necessary to increase production, it was thought that the number of rats would increase sufficiently to ensure a reasonable return of the private capital invested, and provide the province with a sufficiently strong foundation stock after the expiry of the leases. The lands leased are useless for any other

purpose, and insofar as the experiment has been proceeded with, it has been successful, as a total of 92,186 rats have been taken off these lands since the leases were granted, whereas it is doubtful if 25 per cent of that number could have been secured had no particular attention been paid to their nurture.

The numbers of muskrats taken each spring since the leases were granted is:

<u>Spring</u>	<u>No. Rats Pelted</u>	<u>Average Value</u>	<u>Total Value</u>	<u>Royalty Paid</u>
1934	12,257	.70	8,579.90	612.85
1935	23,780	.95	22,591.00	1,189.00
1936	30,538	1.45	43,990.10	1,516.80
1937	25,811	1.51	38,866.74	1,290.55
Total	92,186		\$109,747.74	\$4,609.50

An area comprising approximately 150,000 acres and situated 15 miles south east of The Pas has been set aside and is in course of development for the propagation of muskrats. This area is specially patrolled, all trapping is prohibited and in the fall of 1937 it was estimated that it carried a population of 24,000 rats. This land is only suitable for breeding rats and it is fully expected that when they have increased sufficiently it will provide a valuable source of revenue for local trappers and incidentally increase the royalty revenue.

The work undertaken by the Department and by private concerns in ditching and damming areas of muskrat country, was necessitated by a succession of dry seasons which so reduced the numbers of muskrats, a water loving animal, that it was imperative action should be taken to divert water to the dry areas so that the rats could increase naturally when supplied with sufficient water and food. The success achieved so far is such as to encourage the hope that the right remedy

has been found, and that these works will, in the near future, be extended to other parts of the north and that the production of rats will soon reach the numbers of by-gone years.

The greatest enemy of game and fur bearers is the forest fire, which by destroying the helpless young and depriving the survivors of food and shelter, does more damage than many trappers could do by too intensive and illegal trapping. The prevention and fighting of these fires, is, of course, the concern of all, but particularly of the Forestry Branch.

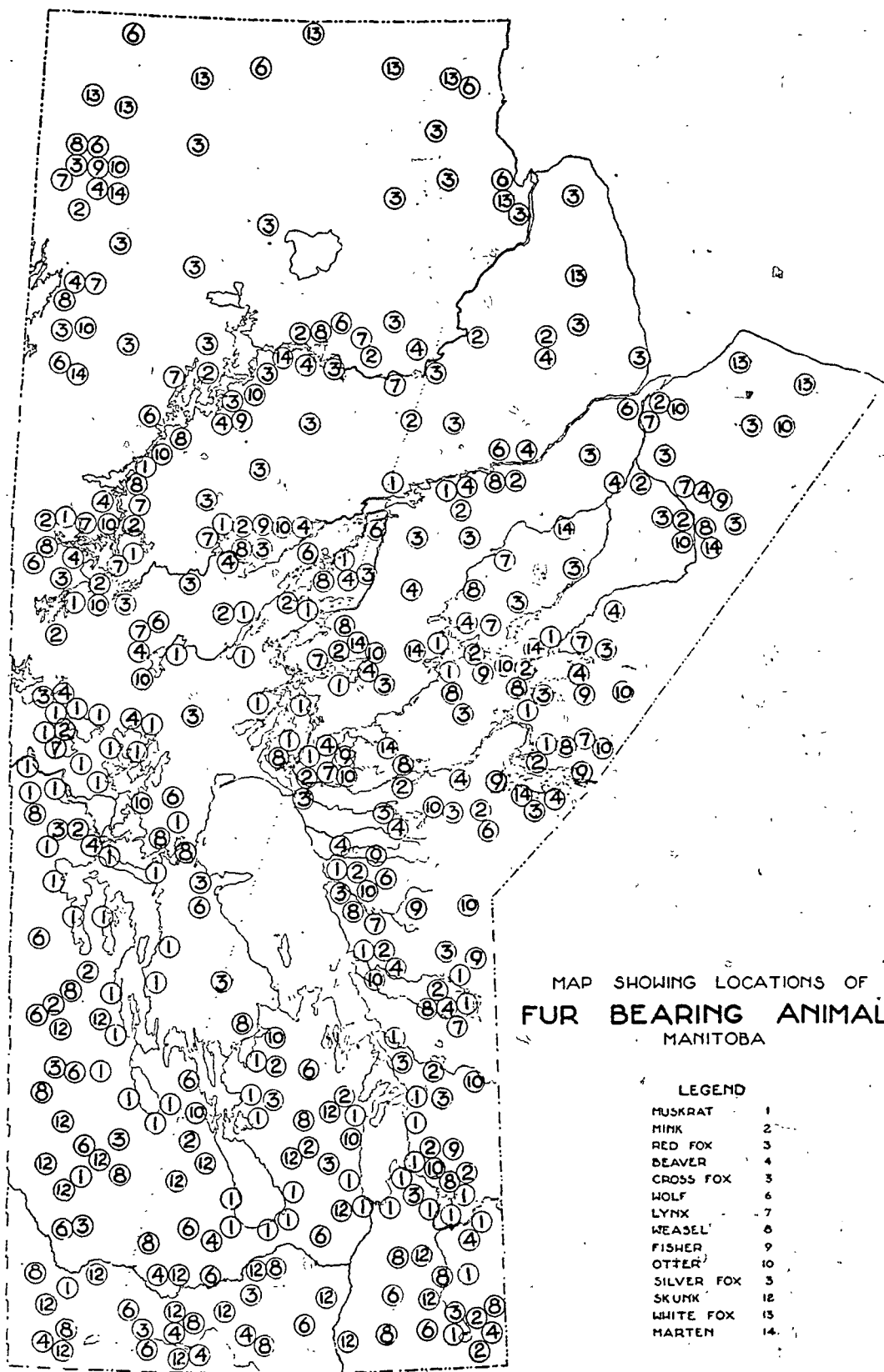
VARIABLE PRODUCTION

Our statistics showing the yearly catch of furs from the wild extend over a period of 13 years, and the graphs attached to this report show at a glance the years of plenty and scarcity for each species.

The following statement shows these years together with the average for the period. Generally speaking Season 1933/34 was the peak year and 1927/28 and 1928/29 were very low years.

STATEMENT SHOWING HIGH, LOW & AVERAGE PRODUCTION FROM THE WILD FOR PERIOD OF 13 YEARS.

Species	High	Year	Low	Year	Average - 13 Years
Beaver	7,906	1933/34	54	1930/31	4,175
Fisher	953	1925/26	160	1930/31	495
Fox, Coloured	26,232	1933/34	3,294	1928/29	11,533
Fox, White	8,397	1924/25	232	1936/37	2,013
Lynx	2,394	1925/26	612	1923/29	1,283
Marten	2,191	1925/26	30	1933/34	775
Mink	28,388	1933/34	9,853	1927/28	15,360
Muskrat	441,623	1925/26	213,866	1927/28	318,847
Otter	1,759	1929/30	711	1931/32	1,254
Skunk	17,324	1936/37	4,809	1929/30	9,210
Weasel	137,672	1936/37	56,807	1924/25	89,363
Wolf	15,056	1927/28	2,031	1931/32	5,415



MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF
FUR BEARING ANIMALS
 MANITOBA

LEGEND	
MUSKRAT	1
MINK	2
RED FOX	3
BEAVER	4
CROSS FOX	6
WOLF	7
LYNX	8
WEASEL	9
FISHER	10
OTTER	12
SILVER FOX	13
SKUNK	14
WHITE FOX	15
MARTEN	16

THE FUR BEARING ANIMALS OF MANITOBA

A review of the fur industry in Manitoba is not complete without a brief reference to the types of fur bearing animals which are found in the province. In the succeeding paragraphs a brief description of the fur-bearing animals in the province is given.

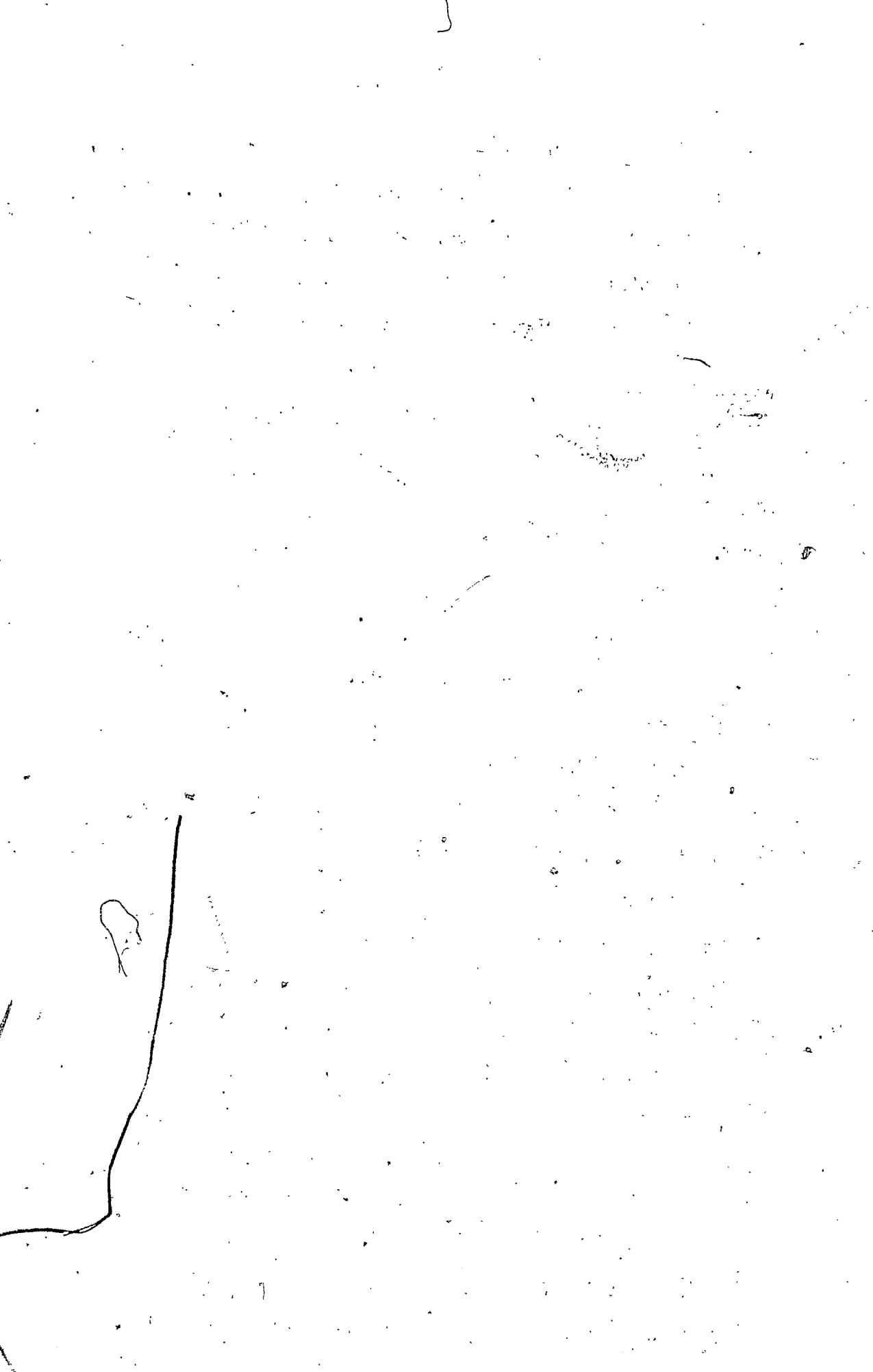
BADGER is a large animal of the weasel family with a thick heavy body, short tail, short legs with front foot immensely powerful with long claws developed for digging, ears very short. General colour is silvery grey. In Manitoba it is confined to the dry prairie regions. In early days the estimated number in Manitoba was 20,000, but with the opening up of the prairies the number speedily diminished. The largest number taken, of which we have record is 1,476 in 1927/28. For several years the taking of them in this province has been prohibited. The average value of the pelt during season 1936/37 was \$9.39, when 24 were taken in Manitoba by authority. The hair of the badger is valued for making shaving brushes. In the nature of things, the number of badger now in Manitoba must be few, as they will not leave their original habitat to seek protection elsewhere.

BEAR (black and brown). This difference in colour does not mean a difference of species. The brown are more freaks of the black. A black bear may have brown (or cinnamon) young this year, and black the next year, or even one of each kind in the same litter. So also a brown bear may give birth to either black or brown young. The proportion of brown bears to black in Manitoba is about one in twenty. The number of bears taken ranged from 108 in 1932/33 to 598 in 1928/29.

For some years the fur market has shown little interest in bears, and except for specimen skins, the value is about \$2.00. They are often retained for personal use, but sometimes a demand arises in London for quantities of them for Army use. At Churchill, and along the shores of Hudson Bay, a few white bear are taken. These come down from the Arctic on the drifting ice, but few, except specially large, perfect and complete skins (with head and claws) are in demand.

BEAVER. Perhaps the most interesting of our native animals formerly ranged over all parts of the province where water was plentiful, but now, except for isolated and specially protected colonies in the south, is only to be found in quantity in certain districts of the north, such as Nelson House, Split Lake, York Factory, Lac du Brochet and other isolated districts. The natural habits and instincts of the beaver are well known and there is no need to detail them here. The fur of the beaver was the foundation of the fur trade and it is still, after more than 300 years, a staple article in steady demand. It is a valuable and palatable food and has saved many Indians from starvation in time of scarcity.

In seasons 1924/25 and 1925/26 the catch was 6,324 and 5,498 respectively, then followed five years of close protection. The next six years saw an annual average take of 6,885. The highest catch recorded in 13 years was 7,906 in 1933/34. Last year it was 7,754, so that, it would appear that if given complete protection for a few years after a period of open season, there is no danger of breeding stocks reaching a dangerously low point. Last season (1936/37) the average value of beaver pelts was \$14.21, the same as it was for the three years previous, illustrating the fact that as it is a "man's fur", it is not affected by the vagaries of feminine fashion.



FISHER is a misnomer as this animal does not fish. It is allied to the marten and is found in wooded country. In general its colour is greyish brown or brownish black, but it varies greatly in shade. The most valuable is the small, dark female; a large male is usually greyish in fur, coarse in texture and is not particularly sought after. In Manitoba its range is principally in the wooded country east of Lake Winnipeg to Ontario, where it is much more numerous than in Manitoba. It is seldom seen in Saskatchewan or Alberta. It has never been plentiful here, the largest catch being 953 in 1925/26 and the average for 13 years, 495. The small, dark female may easily fetch \$75.00, but the average for last season was \$46.83. It is now the most valuable of all fur-bearers and as it has not yet been reared domestically, like the fox and the mink, it would appear that steps should be taken to afford it the same protection as is accorded to the marten.

FOXES. Our different species of foxes include, red, cross, silver, blue and white. White and blue foxes are only found in the extreme north of the province, and are merely visitors from the Arctic brought down by certain ice and weather conditions which differ from year to year. Blue fox, though valuable, are negligible in quantity. As many as 8,397 white foxes have been taken in season 1924/25. This would appear to be a phenomenal number, to explain which the writer is at a loss. The average for the 13 year period is 2,013, and the lowest number recorded is 232 in season 1936/37.

Red foxes are found all over the province, but principally in the north. They are so familiar that everybody knows something of their habits and characteristics. The season 1933/34 was a peak year

for silver, cross and red foxes. All of them reached in that year their highest production in 13 years. Conversely their low point in the same period was reached in 1928/29. Consequently it may be expected that though in season 1936/37, only 11,066 coloured foxes were taken, the current season 1937/38 will see a further decline, and the low point will not be reached until season 1938/39, after which production should again rise.

It is said that in their wild state, silver, black and cross foxes are mere colour freaks of the red fox, and may be found in the same brood with those of ordinary colour, but when silver foxes are captured alive they can be bred in captivity true to colour, and in this way fur farming received its start.

Taking the market of 1936/37, the average value of all foxes was:-

Fox, silver	28.23
" cross	22.33
" white	21.61
" blue	50.26
" red	8.67

The proportion of coloured foxes taken over a period of 13 years is one silver to six cross to twenty-one red.

LYNX. This species used to range over the whole of Manitoba wherever there was cover. It is a large grey furred animal of the cat family, and the pelt for several years past has been highly valued. It is, however, for all its size an easy animal to trap owing to its distinctive and instinctive habits. Once a lynx track is seen the knowledgeable trapper knows exactly where and how to place his trap and the lynx, the least intelligent of animals, walks into it every time. His favorite food is the rabbit and not

so many years ago a good catch of lynx could be expected when bush rabbits were plentiful. Now, however, owing to its habits and to intensive trapping, the lynx has failed to show up in numbers even in good rabbit years.

Our records show a high of 2,394 in 1925/26 and a low of 612 in 1928/29. Last year's catch being 778, and the average for 13 years, 1,283. The average value last season was \$35.30.

MARTEN inhabits thick, wooded country and will not live in broken or cleared lands. It prefers gloom to sunshine and the merest beginning of a clearing about a settler's home is enough to drive it away, consequently it has always been one of the first to retreat before civilization.

In general, its fur is of a rich, dark yellowish brown, shaded into blackish on the tail and legs, and into grey on the head, with ear linings of dull whitish and a large irregular patch of pale buff or orange on the throat and breast.

The marten is practically a tree dweller and in the event of a forest fire the destruction of them must be heavy. Manitoba was never a heavy producer of marten. The greatest number of which we have record being 2,191 in 1925/26. Thereafter the number dropped steadily until after season 1932/33 they fell to 150. Thereafter they were strictly protected by a closed season all the year round, and the few taken in recent years have been taken accidentally or as authorized by the Game Branch.

Reports from the north western part of the province indicate that the protection accorded them has resulted in an increase in

that part, and it is hoped that this valuable animal will be definitely spared extinction.

The average value of marten during season 1936/37 was \$26.92. The fur for many years past has been in great demand.

MINK is found all over Manitoba. Although it can live in the water, and catch fish, it can also hunt on the land. The mink is a great enemy of the muskrat and follows it under water, killing it in spite of a most desperate resistance. In farming country it often raids poultry runs, and will live around a farm until found and destroyed.

The fur of the mink is a staple of the trade. It is a close, strong, dark beautiful fur of great durability. Its market value varies much with the changes of fashion, and a year ago reached a phenomenal level. It is prime all through the winter unlike the fox. The mink lends itself readily to domestication and raising of these animals is a profitable undertaking for fur farmers.

The largest number taken in Manitoba in recent years was 28,888 in 1933/34, and the smallest 9,833 in 1927/28. Season 1936/37 saw 15,083 taken and the average for 13 years is 15,360. The average price last season was \$15.11, but this has since been greatly reduced.

MUSKRAT in numbers the most numerous and in aggregate value, the most valuable of all Manitoba fur bearers. It is an inhabitant of every part of Manitoba. Except when seeking a new home, it is never found away from water. Its special environment is marshy ponds and the banks of slow running sunny streams. The fur is a chestnut brown, darkest in the crown and back, becoming much paler and greyer on the belly and cheeks. It is in steady demand and can be dyed and treated to resemble seal. The muskrat has many of the habits of the beaver,

resembling it in its home building, feeding and cleanly habits so that it also can be used for human food.

The matter of rehabilitation and propagation of the muskrat under man's supervision on leased ranches and special areas has already been touched upon, and these measures, together with the natural fecundity of the animal will ensure a steady crop of pelts for many years.

The largest number trapped in Manitoba was 441,623 in 1925/26, the smallest 213,866 in 1927/28. The average for 13 years is 318,847, and the production in the spring of 1937 was 324,820. The average price of the crop last spring was \$1.54.

OTTER used to be found in all parts of Manitoba, but its numbers are now greatly reduced. Frequenting invariably the water or vicinity of water, the otter finds its ideal surroundings in good sized clear streams that abound with fish and that are much varied in bank and bed by pools, rapids, log-jams and over-hanging rocky banks. In winter it will travel long distances through the snow in search of open water in rapids and swiftly flowing streams.

The otter is the fisherman par excellence: it is the successful fisherman, and there incurs the hatred of all other fishermen.

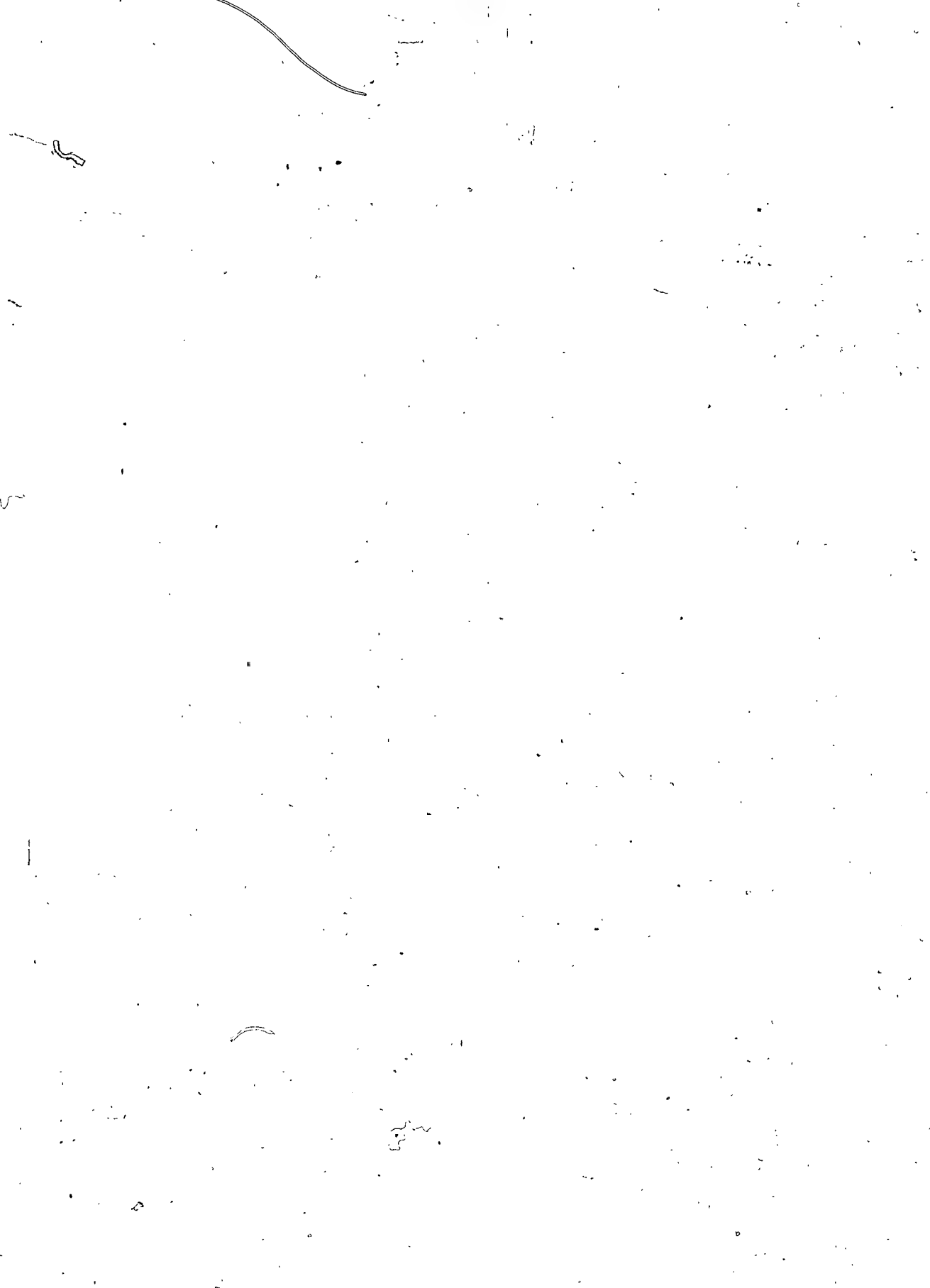
The fur is one of the best, handsomest and most durable on the market. Being principally a man's fur, the price does not fluctuate unreasonably and is always fairly high. In colour it is a dark, rich, glossy brown, becoming paler and greyer below. The darker in colour the higher is the price. In season 1929/30 a record number of 1,759 was taken here, in 1931/32 the number sank to 71, in 1936/37 it was 1,662 and the average for 13 years is 1,254. In some parts of the province special protection was accorded, but

owing to increase of numbers, this has been withdrawn for the present. The average value last season was \$15.61.

SKUNK are found in nearly all parts of southern Manitoba but are very rare in the north. It is an animal that is not particularly afraid of civilization, no doubt because of its well-known weapon of defence. It has long fur, black in colour with a thin white strip on the face and a broad one beginning on the nape, forking in the shoulders to reach to the hindquarters. Its favourite localities are the edges of the woods and marshes, where sunlight and cover mingling provide it with food, warmth and shelter.

The numbers taken during season 1936/37 constituted a record for the province, being no less than 17,324. The average for 13 years is 9,210. The average price last year was \$1.50, so that this animal contributed considerable revenue to farmers and their boys.

WEASEL is common to all Manitoba and appears to be in no danger of extinction. It is the only fur bearer that turns from brown in summer to white in winter. There appear to be two distinct varieties, the small, short-tail of the north or bush country, and the large, long-tail of the south or farm lands. Like the skunk, last season produced the record number of 137,672 against an average for 13 years of 89,363. They are mostly trapped by Indian women and boys and as the average value last year was \$1.15, it must have been a welcome addition to many families' incomes.

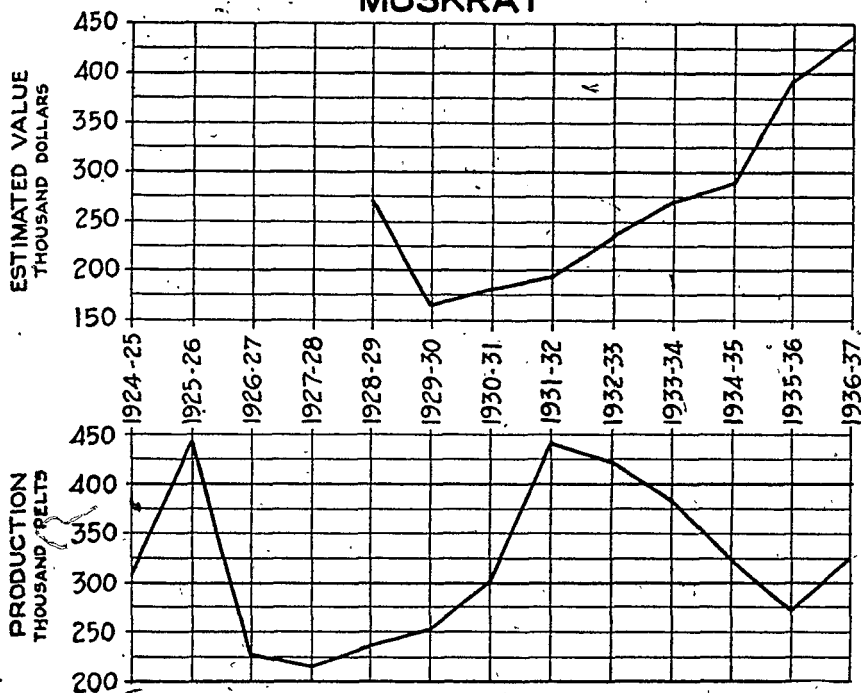


WOLF a predatory animal of which we would be glad to rid the country. There are two varieties, the bayote or prairie wolf and the timber wolf of the north. The former are still plentiful on the prairies and the latter are a constant menace to the big game both in the south and the north. As far as the game laws are concerned, they are outlawed and anybody can destroy them at any time by any means except poison or snares as these two weapons are more likely to harm other animals than wolves. Last season 3,382 wolves of both kinds were killed, but there are still too many left. The average value of the pelt is \$10.96.

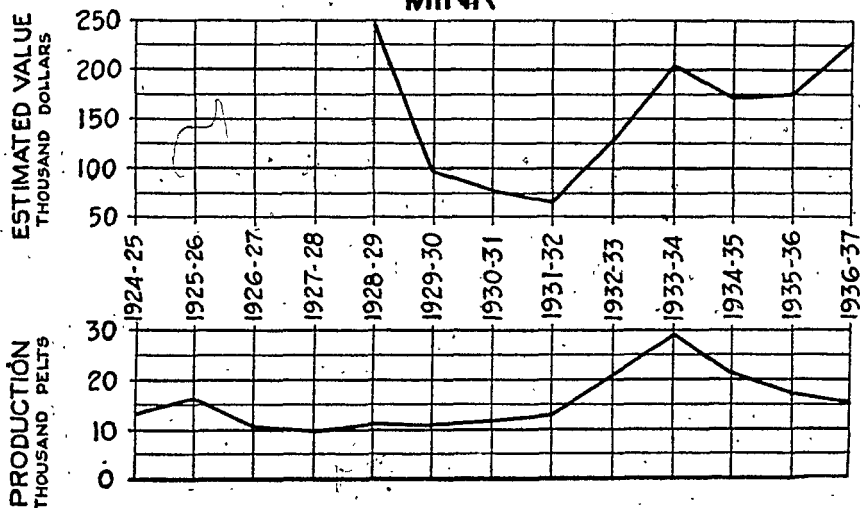
WOLVERINE is another nuisance though fortunately far rarer than the wolf. It lives mainly by eating animals it finds in traps, and unlucky is the trapper whose trapline is frequented by one of them. It is only found in the far north and the average taken in Manitoba during 13 years was 37. It is immensely strong and can destroy or pollute the strongest cache of meat. Its fur is useful in providing fringes for parkas used in the Arctic as for some peculiar reason, it is impervious to freezing breath.

PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA MUSKRAT



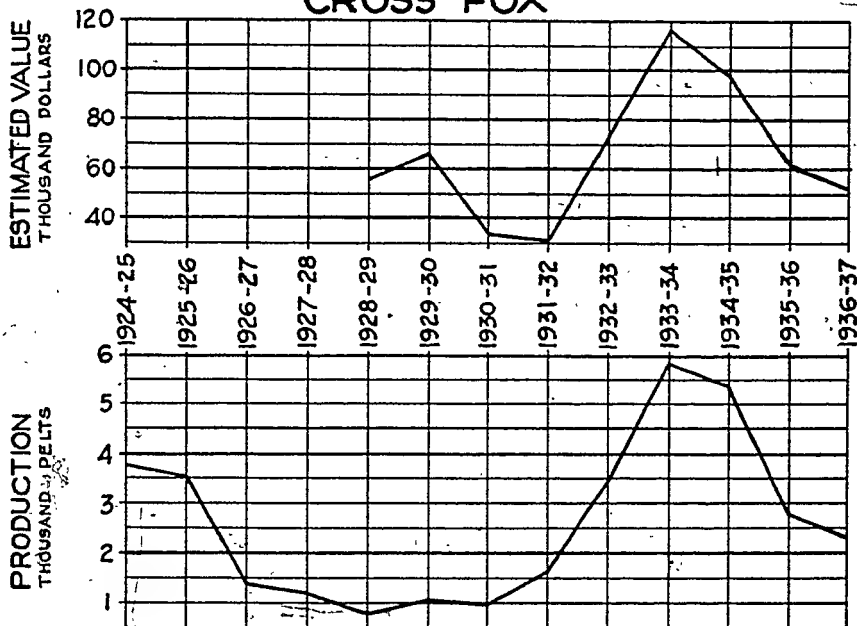
MINK



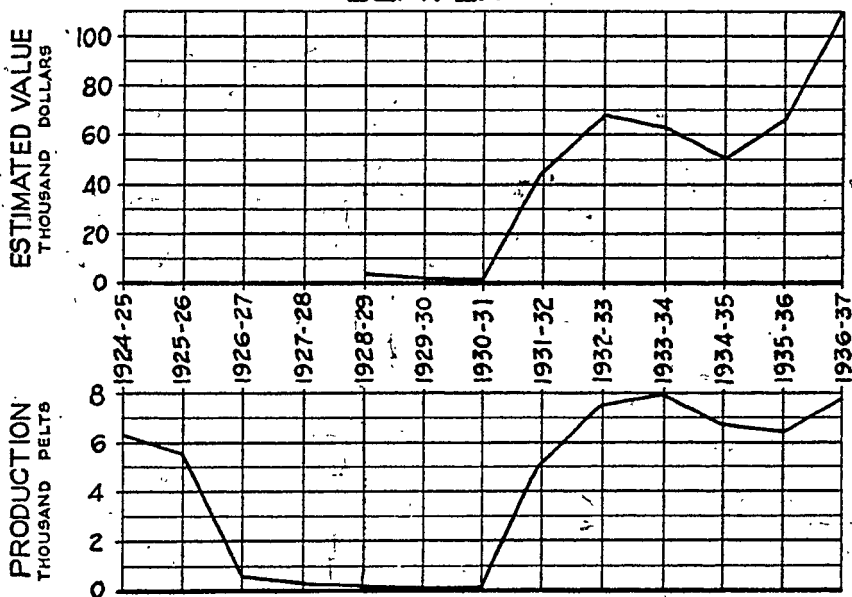
PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA

CROSS FOX



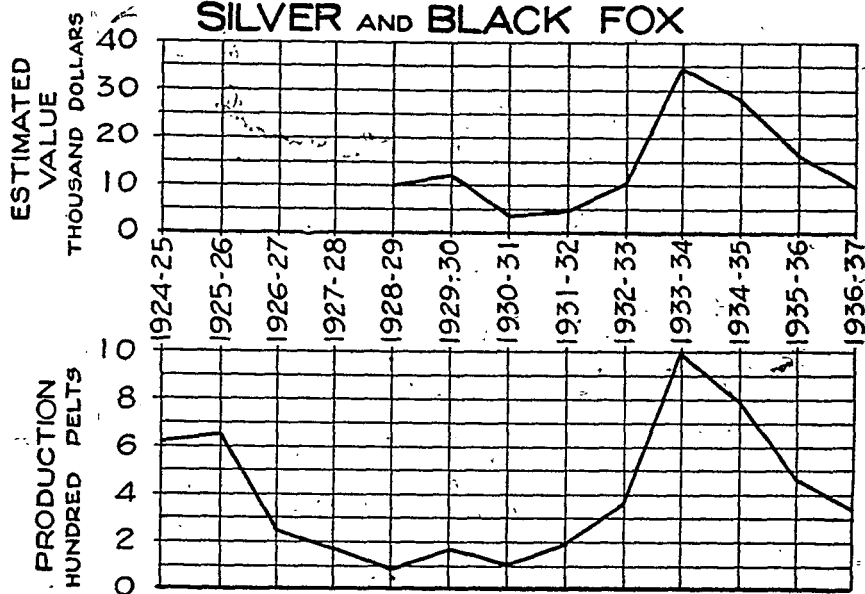
BEAVER



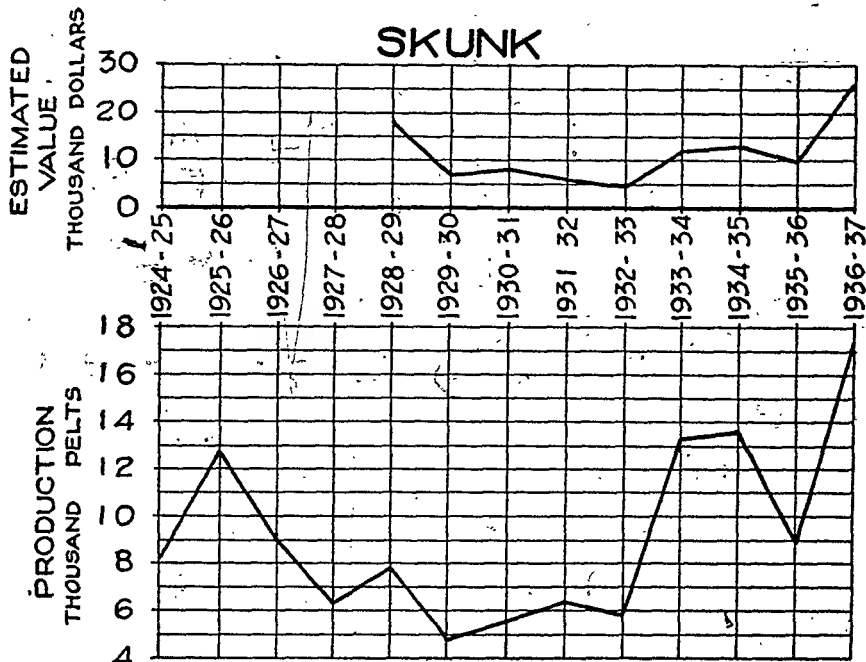
PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA

SILVER AND BLACK FOX



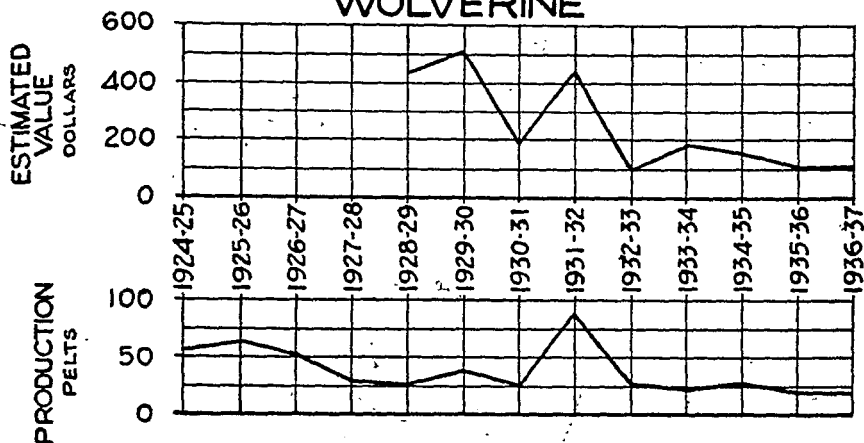
SKUNK



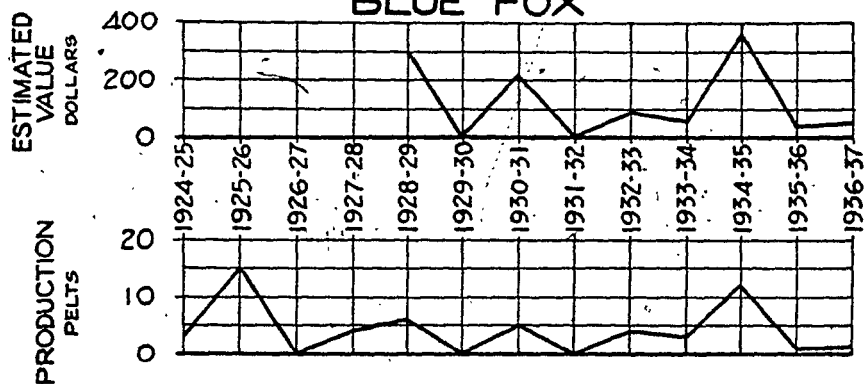
PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA

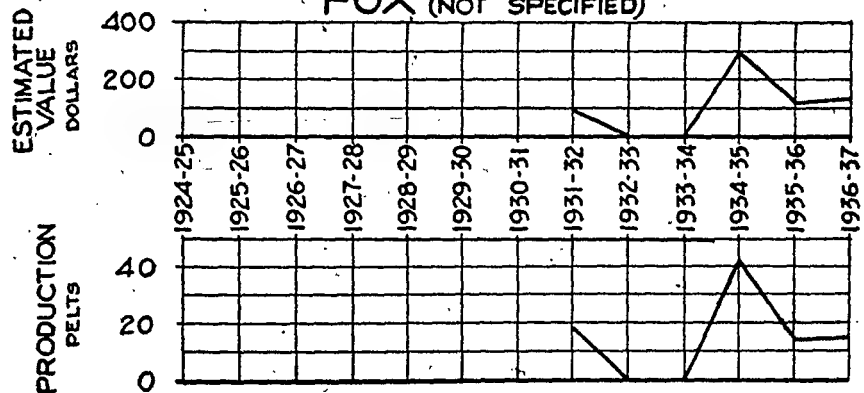
WOLVERINE



BLUE FOX

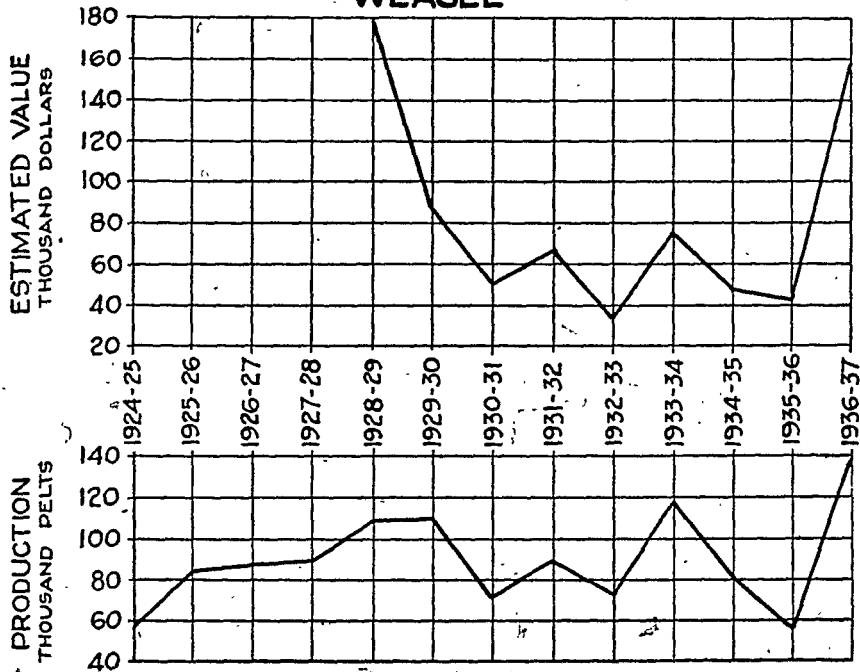


FOX (NOT SPECIFIED)

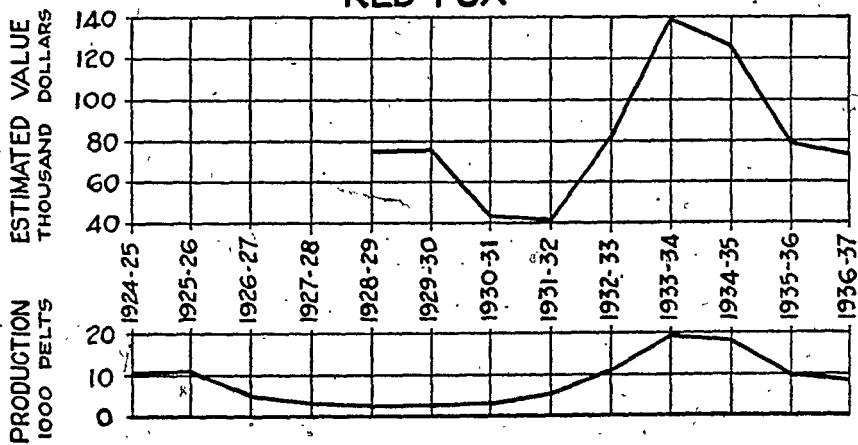


PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA WEASEL

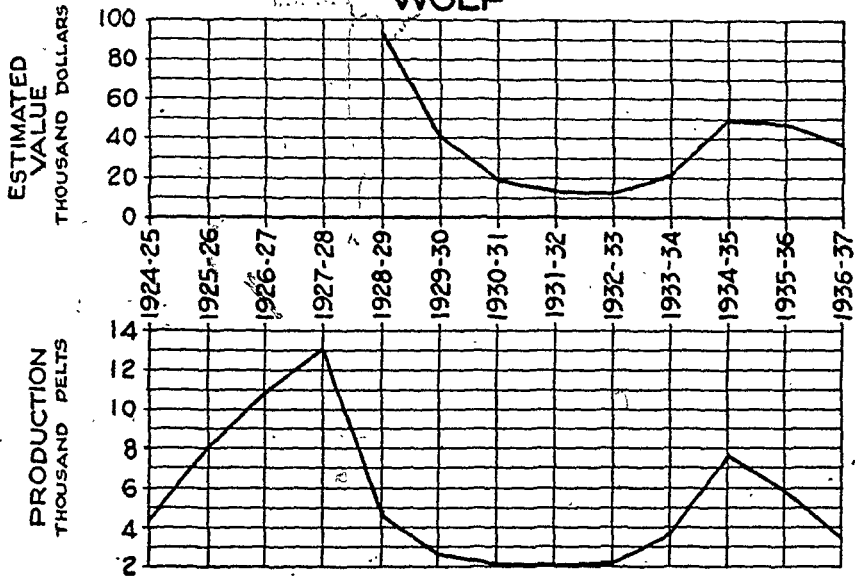


RED FOX

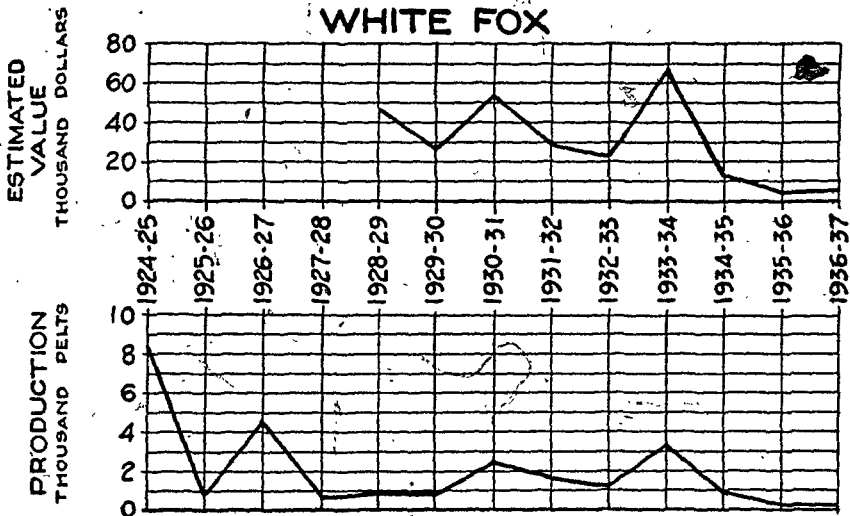


PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA WOLF



WHITE FOX

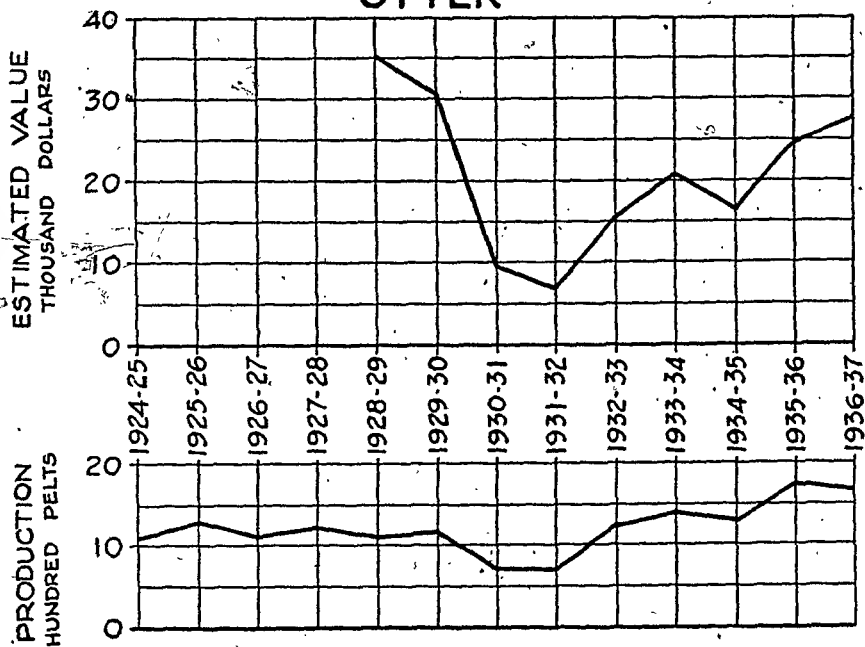




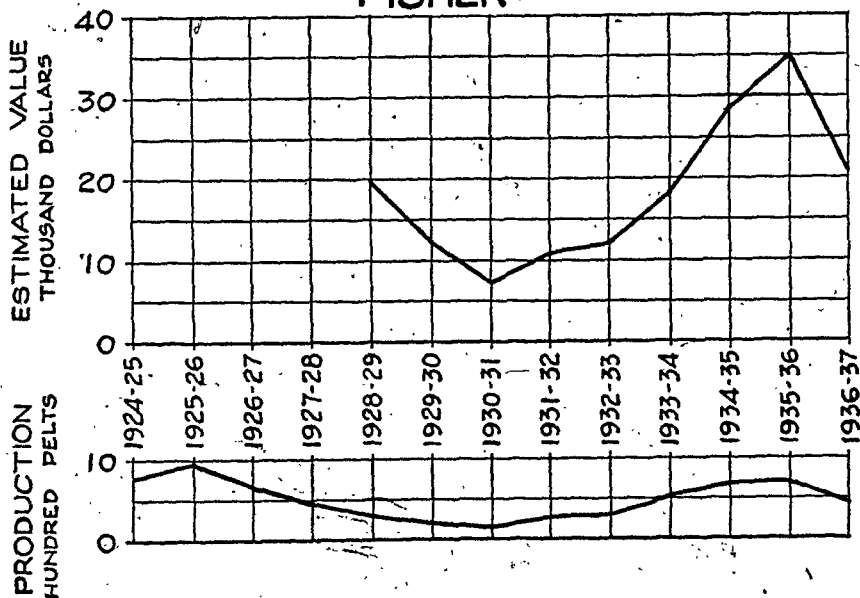
PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA

OTTER

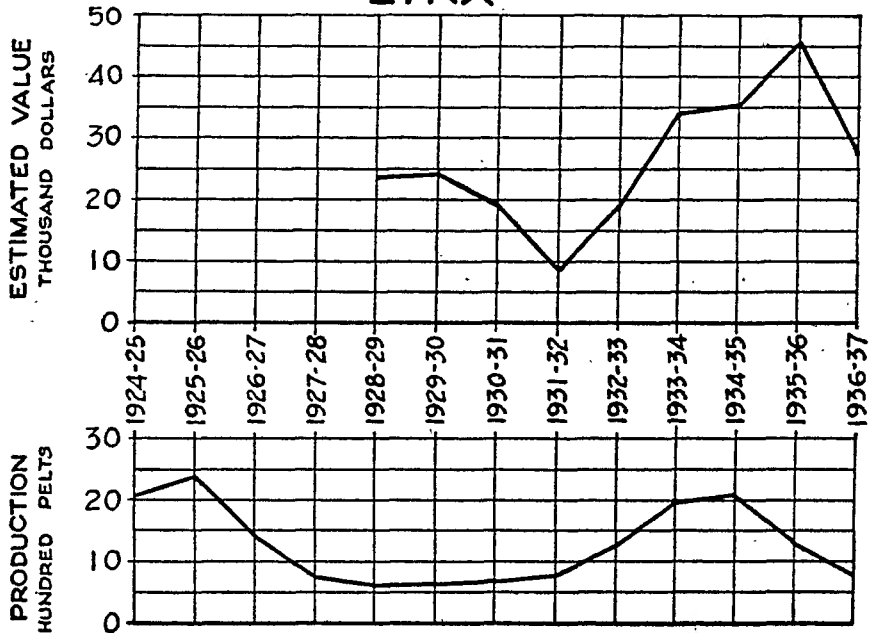


FISHER

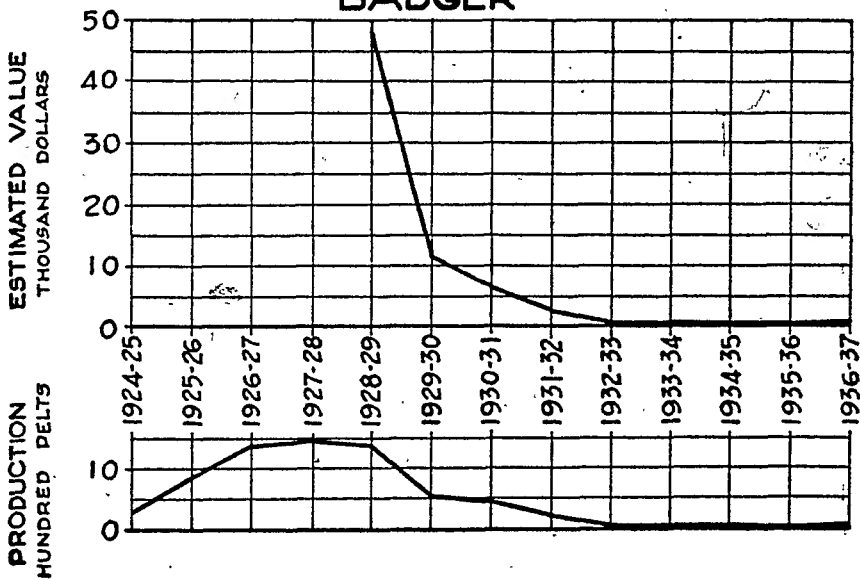


PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA LYNX



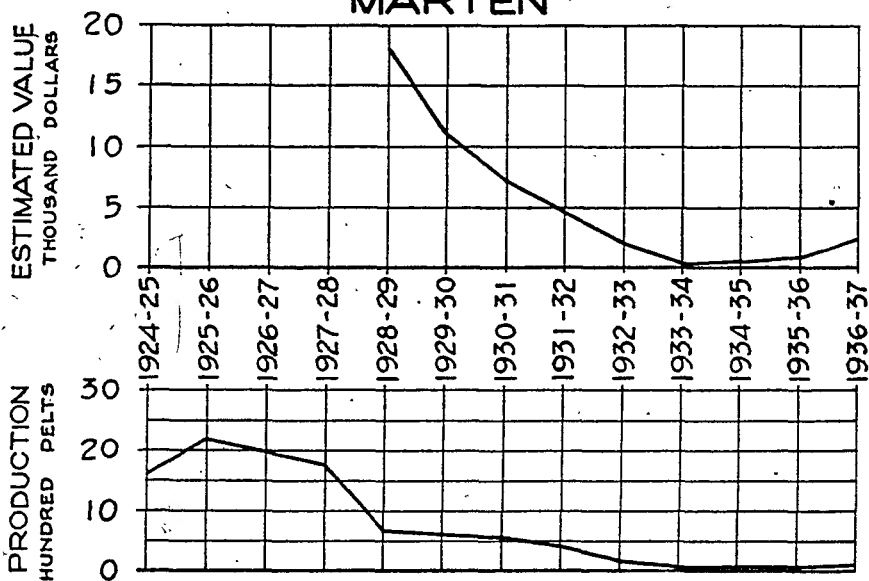
BADGER



PRODUCTION AND ESTIMATED VALUE OF WILD FURS

MANITOBA

MARTEN



BEAR

